A year in malware

Much of our time this year has been spent working with our clients, making sure they're ready to fend off newly emerging cyber threats or malware strains.

So to look back at the year, we thought we'd round up what many experts agree have been the nastiest attacks of 2022.

At the top of the list is Emotet. Chances are you haven't heard of it by that name, but it's a trojan that's spread by spam email. It usually looks like a genuine email with familiar branding, but it tries to persuade the recipient to click a malicious link (using language like 'your invoice' or 'payment details'. It may also look like it's from a parcel company).

This malware goes through your contact list and sends itself to family, friends, colleagues, and clients. Then it looks less like spam, because it's come from your email account.

In second position is LockBit. This is ransomware that's designed to block access to your files and systems when cyber criminals encrypt them. They ask you to pay a ransom for the decryption key (which often they still don't hand over, even when you've paid).

This is a targeted attack that spreads itself once it's infiltrated one device on a network. In fact, it can 'live' for weeks inside a network before the attack is launched.

In third place is Conti, another form of ransomware, and in forth position is Qbot, a trojan designed to steal banking information and passwords.

It may all sound scary, but there's plenty you can do to give your business greater protection from these threats:

- Keep your entire network and all devices updated
- Don't download suspicious attachments or click links unless you're certain they're genuine
- Practice strong password hygiene, including using multi-factor authentication, password managers, biometrics and Passkeys where available
- Give your people access only to the systems and files they need
- Remove ex-employees from your network immediately
- Create and regularly check backups
- Educate your people regularly

We can help with all of this – just get in touch.

Business gadget of the month
Qi Wireless Charging Mouse Mat

Is your desk looking a little cluttered, with charging cables everywhere? It might be time to see what you can get rid of.

This large mouse mat with fast wireless charging could be the answer to your prayers. Just place your phone, your tablet, even your earphones on it and they'll charge while you work, without the tangle of cables getting in your way.
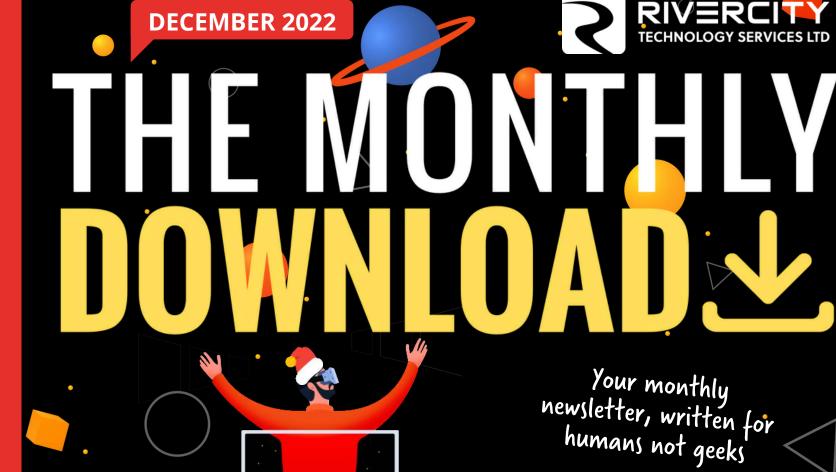
Better yet, it's under $35!

Q: My laptop keeps disconnecting from my Wi-Fi. Can I stop this happening?

A: First, check if you have any updates and run them. If that doesn't fix the problem, it may be that you have outdated network drivers, a faulty network card, or security software that's blocking the connection.

Q: My files keep opening in the wrong application. Help!

A: This is a frustrating problem, but an easy fix. Right click the file you want to open and select 'Open with' then 'Choose another app'. Then check the box that says 'Always open with this app'.

Q: The display on my monitor suddenly looks low resolution. Why?

A: It may be that you need to update your graphics drivers. If you know the brand and model, go to the manufacturer's website and download the latest update. If that doesn't work, drop us a message.

Can you imagine doing business in the metaverse?

According to many experts, we're going to experience more technological progress in the next 10 years than we did in the previous 100.

If you look back at what's changed in the last decade, maybe that's not as unbelievable as it sounds.

One area that many of the big tech companies are investing billions in right now is developing the metaverse.

This is predicted to become the new internet. Facebook is so committed to the metaverse, it changed the name of the company to Meta. But it's not alone. Dozens of huge companies are dedicating enormous amounts of R&D to it.

Imagine a massive 3D virtual space which mimics aspects of the physical world. We can all meet there at the same time, perhaps using virtual reality goggles or augmented reality glasses.

It seems like science fiction, yet it *will* happen in some way and at some point.

Talking about this now is the equivalent of telling an office worker back in 1995 about the way we work today.

Who'd have believed back then that within a few decades they could work from home making video calls across the globe from almost any device… and they'd be carrying the equivalent of a super computer in their pocket?

How do you think your business will change when the metaverse arrives?

DID YOU KNOW…
the 'hacker holiday' is no more

Sadly, it looks like the 'hacker holiday' is over. Figures used to suggest that in the four months directly after Christmas, cyber criminals were less active.

However, this year we saw a massive 1100% increase in phishing emails between January and April.

A phishing email pretends to be from a company or contact you know, but it's actually an attempt to steal your login details.

Stay vigilant in the new year.

Tech facts

#1

Silicon Valley used to have the nickname 'The Valley of Death', when it was thought PCs would replace jobs

#2

The first computer was so big it took up 1800 square feet

#3

97% of people type words into Google to spell check them

Technology update

If you're looking to boost Wi-Fi speeds across a large site, you may have considered a mesh router system. It's a series of devices working together to provide better coverage.

Now, after three years in the making, Google has updated its Nest Wi-Fi Pro mesh router. Not only does it look sleeker, but it's faster, with the very latest connectivity.

It constantly analyses network performance and optimizes connections too. If you have speed issues or Wi-Fi dead zones, get in touch. We can advise what kind of technology would best suit your business premises.

High-Speed

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do."

Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple

TEST YOUR TECH KNOWLEDGE WITH THIS MONTH'S QUIZ

☕ **Who's doing the next coffee run? The loser of this quiz!**

1. What was the first computer system to support a color display?
2. When was the first 1GB capacity disk drive released?
3. What's the name of the output device used to display information in visual form?
4. 'Laser', 'Dot Matrix' and 'Inkjet' are types of which output device?
5. Which is the single most popular computer system ever sold?

The answer are below.

5) Commodore 64
4) Printers
3) A monitor
2) 1980
1) Apple 1

@

NEW TO MICROSOFT 365

Assign tasks from within Word

Teams is a great tool for creating and assigning tasks to people, but have you ever thought it would be good to do it directly within the document you're working on?

Coming later this month, Microsoft will allow you to create, assign and track tasks within your Word document – simply by using @ mentions.